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Van Woerkom bill would encourage dentists to participate in Medicaid

LANSING – Dentists who participate in Medicaid or volunteer their services to Medicaid-eligible patients could be eligible for help with their student loans under legislation introduced Wednesday in the Michigan Senate, announced Sen. Gerald Van Woerkom, sponsor of the bill.

“With the pool of Medicaid benefits continuing to shrink, this is a way to help ensure Medicaid patients get the care they need,” said Van Woerkom, R-Norton Shores. “Our hope is that this bill will help reduce dental health problems for Medicaid patients.”

Senate Bill 316 would allow qualified dentists to receive a tax credit equal to the total amount of student loan payments they made in a tax year, up to \$5,000, in exchange for their service to Medicaid-eligible patients.

To qualify, licensed dentists must be state residents and have their primary dental practice in Michigan. Dentists must also provide dental services to Medicaid recipients for reimbursement to qualify or provide dental services on a voluntary basis to Medicaid patients for at least 12 hours each month during the tax year they claim the credit.

If the bill becomes law, dentists could claim the tax credit for a maximum of four years.

The legislation has been referred to the Senate Finance Committee.